

LOUISIANA

WHIP

WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM

STATE HANDBOOK

FISCAL YEAR 2006

USDA



FY-2006 WHIP Time Line

- **October 2005– September 2006**
 - Continuous Sign-Up (FY-2005 applications that were not funded will be deferred to FY-2006, unless cancelled by the applicant)
- **October, 2005**
 - Conduct WHIP Program Training
 - State Office provides FY-06 WHIP Handbook
- **January 13, 2006**
 - Cut Off Date for First Ranking Pool Applications (Applications are to be entered into ProTracts with Estimated Cost and Ranked as they are received)
- **February 10, 2006**
 - Complete Ranking Process for First Ranking Pool
 - Confirm that all applications being considered for First Pool funding are entered into ProTracts with “Eligible” status, Estimated Cost, and Ranking Score
- **February 15, 2006**
 - State Office notifies field offices of First Pool applications selected for plan development and parish allocation
- **March 10, 2006**
 - All Contracts Selected for funding from First Parish Allocation Completed and Signed by participant, and recorded as “Approved” status in ProTracts
- **March 17, 2006**
 - Cut Off Date for Second Ranking Pool Applications (Applications are to be entered into ProTracts with Estimated Cost and Ranked as they are received)
 - All Contracts Selected for funding from First Parish Allocation Signed/Obligated by Contracting Officer (Area Conservationist) in ProTracts
 - Parish Allocation Sweep
- **April 7, 2006**
 - Complete Ranking Process for Second Ranking Pool
 - Confirm that all applications being considered for Second Pool funding are entered into ProTracts with “Eligible” status, Estimated Cost, and Ranking Score
- **April 12, 2006**
 - State Office notifies field offices of Second Pool applications selected for plan development and parish allocation
- **May 5, 2006**
 - All Contracts Selected for funding from Second Parish Allocation Completed and Signed by participant, and recorded as “Approved” status in ProTracts
- **May 12, 2006**
 - Cut Off Date for Third Ranking Pool Applications (Applications are to be entered into ProTracts with Estimated Cost and Ranked as they are received)
 - All Contracts Selected for funding from Second Parish Allocation Signed/Obligated by Contracting Officer (Area Conservationist) in ProTracts
 - Parish Allocation Sweep

(continued)

FY-2006 WHIP Time Lime (continued)

- **June 2, 2006**
 - Complete Ranking Process for Third Ranking Pool
 - Confirm that all applications being considered for Third Pool funding are entered into ProTracts with “Eligible” status, Estimated Cost, and Ranking Score
- **June 7, 2006**
 - State Office notifies field offices of Third Pool applications selected for plan development and parish allocation
- **June 30, 2006**
 - All Contracts Selected for funding from Third Parish Allocation Completed and Signed by participant, and recorded as “Approved” status in ProTracts
- **July 7, 2006**
 - All Contracts Selected for funding from Third Parish Allocation Signed/Obligated by Contracting Officer (Area Conservationist) in ProTracts
 - Parish Allocation Sweep

INTRODUCTION

The Louisiana State Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Plan was developed through a partnership of federal and state agencies, private industry, environmental groups, and locally-led Soil & Water Conservation District work groups. The plan was formulated to address local wildlife habitat needs and to compliment the Louisiana NRCS Conservation Partnership Strategic Management Plan.

Program Objectives

The plan's objectives address parish, state, and national wildlife resource concerns. This plan is designed to give high priority to those habitat types and associated wildlife which have been impacted by agricultural and forestry activities. Priority was given to habitats not addressed by other conservation programs and to restoration/enhancement of sites that will compliment other programs.

The main objectives of the Louisiana WHIP are to:

- Sustain and conserve threatened and endangered species
- Sustain and conserve native and rare habitats
- Protect and improve water quality and fisheries resources
- Protect and improve scenic streams
- Restore and enhance forest lands to increase biodiversity
- Enhance habitat productivity in non-tidal and tidally influenced wetlands
- Restore and enhance wildlife habitat on land that has traditionally been dedicated to other land uses

The plan is targeted to help achieve objectives set by other wildlife conservation initiatives including: National Buffer Initiative, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Ducks Unlimited Louisiana Waterfowl Projects, Neo-tropical Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative, American Forest and Paper Association Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and habitat initiatives formulated under Memorandums of Understanding between NRCS and the Wild Turkey Federation and Quail Unlimited.

The plan promotes the restoration/enhancement of wildlife habitat on private lands; supports locally led wildlife resource conservation activities; promotes a voluntary approach to wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement; and builds and maintains partnerships with both public and private entities.

Habitat Priorities

The habitats targeted for restoration/enhancement under this plan were selected and prioritized by an interdisciplinary team (Technical Advisory Subcommittee (TAS)) represented by a variety of agencies and organizations. The team assessed many proposals for inclusion into the program. Those proposals selected met program objectives; are technically sound; practical to implement; will result in significant benefits to wildlife; are cost efficient; and will be accepted and used by private landowners.

The state has fourteen Common Resource Areas (CRAs, see Appendix F). Specific habitats of concern were then selected and prioritized within these CRAs. Many of the habitat resource concerns are located within multiple CRAs and this is reflected and addressed in the ranking criteria.

The summary below displays the habitats of concern selected from the CRAs. The habitats of concern are listed in order of priority.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 st Priority | Riparian Buffer Establishment |
| 2 nd Priority | Rare-Native Habitats |
| | Cogon Grass Control (Non-native invasive grass) |
| | Longleaf Pine Woodland |
| | Upland Hardwoods |
| | Native Prairie |
| 3 rd Priority..... | Cypress Brake Restoration |
| 4 th Priority..... | Wildlife Corridor Establishment |
| | Watercourse Corridors |
| | Field Borders |
| | Odd Areas |
| 5 th Priority..... | Vegetative Succession Management |
| | Pine Forest (disking/burning/chemical application) |
| | Woodland Rights-of-Way (disking, planting) |
| | Moist Soil Areas (disking, bush hogging, chemicals) |
| 6 th Priority..... | Habitat Bio-diversification |
| | Creation of understory snags in Woodlands |
| | Plantings in Damaged Woodland Areas |
| | Planting Soft/Hard Mast Trees and Shrubs in |
| | woodlands and/or cutovers |
| | Wildlife Watering Facility |
| | Shoreline Plantings in Coastal Marsh |

Most habitat restoration/enhancement will be achieved by planting native trees, shrubs and grasses, or by manipulating the vegetation to set back plant succession. The only habitat of concern, which does not address vegetation, is the Wildlife Watering Facility.

The Habitat Resources Section of this plan contains detailed information about the habitat/wildlife resources and habitats of concern within the Major Land Resource Areas.

State WHIP Application Ranking Procedure

Each application will be ranked with the Louisiana WHIP Ranking Procedure. Ranking will be done after a preliminary Wildlife Habitat Development Plan is completed. This procedure will rank each application numerically. Scores are based on the following factors:

- Habitat of Concern to be Restored
- Location of the Application (Multiple Land Resource Areas)
- Existing Land Use
- Multiple Habitats to be Restored
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Water Quality-Scenic Streams
- Compliments Other Conservation Programs
- Partnerships with Other Funding Sources
- Length of Contract
- Cost/Environmental Benefits

All scores will be recorded ProTracts. Applications will be funded based on the ranking score and available funding.

State WHIP Habitat Assessment Procedure

A Louisiana WHIP Habitat Assessment Procedure has been developed to evaluate the impacts of the restoration/enhancement measures. A Habitat Assessment will be conducted only for those applications accepted/funded for the program. The assessment consists of two sections – Habitat Objectives and Habitat Impacts.

The Habitat Objectives section will be used to identify goals related to the specific types of wildlife habitat elements and habitat components to be restored/enhanced.

The Habitat Impacts section will be used to evaluate baseline conditions of the existing habitat before the restoration and enhancement practices are installed and will be done on a periodic basis thereafter to determine if the habitat objectives have been achieved.

Management recommendations will be given to the landowner to maintain or improve the quality of habitat as indicated by the assessment. The frequency of conducting periodic assessments will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Program Implementation

Habitat restoration/enhancement will be done in accordance with a Wildlife Habitat Development Plan (WHDP) completed by NRCS personnel and/or partners representative(s). A needs assessment will be done before the plan is developed to determine if practices are necessary and if they can be implemented to achieve the desired results.

Habitat will be restored/enhanced according to conservation practice specifications in the NRCS Technical Guide. Appendix C of this plan lists the conservation practices, cost-share rates and maximum allowable cost, which will be paid under this program in Louisiana.

Formal training will be provided to all NRCS and partners personnel who will develop and implement Wildlife Habitat Development plans. NRCS and partners will provide training that will address program policy, ranking of applications, habitat needs assessments, planning and implementation of conservation practices, and conducting habitat impact assessments. Training will be conducted prior to sign-ups and will continue as needed.

Financial Assistance & Technical Assistance

The cost-share rate will be set at no more than 75% per contract.

The cost-share cap is set at \$40,000 per contract. Projects that will require additional cost-share funding may be authorized through a waiver by the State Conservationist. Projects that require additional funding must have a letter of support describing the special circumstances of the project.

Partnerships

There is an excellent opportunity to develop partnerships to implement this program. To date, no formal written agreements have been developed, but other agencies/organizations have expressed an interest to enter into agreements to provide technical/financial assistance to help implement the program.

A number of agencies and organizations have participated in Technical Advisory Committee WHIP subcommittee meetings and have provided technical input in the development of the plan.

Agencies and organizations which have expressed an interest to be partners include:

- Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Louisiana Office of Forestry
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Ducks Unlimited
- Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
- Nature Conservancy
- Natural Heritage Foundation
- Quail Unlimited
- Louisiana Wild Turkey Foundation
- Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association
- Louisiana Forestry Association

Time limitations have prevented the development of formal partnership agreements, but some agencies have written letters of support for the program.

WHIP Quality Assurance

Annual status reviews will be conducted by the NRCS field office representatives and/or partner's representatives in consultation with the landowner.

The status review will consist of the following:

- Review the Wildlife Habitat Development Plan to determine the objectives.
- Conduct an on-site visit to observe the habitat
- Conduct a habitat assessment to determine if plan objectives are met
- Document progress and success
- Discuss management alternatives with the landowner
- Recommend plan revisions if needed

Status reviews will be conducted annually for the life of the contract. The field offices will complete all annual status reviews by the end of the fiscal year.

Annual Quality Reviews will be conducted by area/state office/partners personnel on 5% of the status reviews completed in the state.

The quality review will consist of the following:

- Review the implementation of the ranking procedures
- Review the Wildlife Habitat Development Plan
- Conduct an on-site visit to observe the habitat
- Review the habitat assessment for technical quality and accuracy
- Determine the technical abilities of NRCS field office personnel
- Determine if field office personnel need additional training

Quality reviews will be conducted on an annual basis. Contracts selected for review will be selected randomly at the state office.

The State Resource Conservationist will prepare a quality review report by the end of the fiscal year.

<i>Louisiana Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Plan</i>
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UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT

In Louisiana, upland wildlife habitat spans several major land resource areas (CRAs) including the eastern and western gulf coast flatwoods, the western and southern coastal plain, and the southern and subtropical Mississippi valley silty uplands. Combined, this accounts for approximately 15,030,414 acres or 49.19 percent of the entire state. Upland wildlife habitats range from nearly level (flatwoods & silty uplands) to rolling hills (silty uplands and coastal plain) dissected by numerous wetland types and streams. Significant amounts of acreage are designated as agricultural cropland within the silty uplands while rangeland acreage amounts are more

significant than cropland on flatwoods and coastal plain areas. Timber production accounts for the major land use on the flatwoods and coastal plain CRAs.

Upland wildlife habitats benefit and support many wildlife species including numerous game and non-game species and several federal and state listed threatened and endangered species.

The numerous bayous, streams, lakes, groundwater recharge areas and vast amounts of native vegetation within the uplands greatly contribute to the overall health and well-being of all Louisiana habitants. The unique upland habitat existence and its protection from degradation in quality and diversity are paramount. However, several factors have contributed to its demise.

- 1) The demand for commercial wood products has resulted in a conversion of many native ecotypes (i.e., mixed pine/hardwoods, longleaf pine and shortleaf pine forests) to genetically engineered monocultures of more production-oriented species.
- 2) The increased need for production space has spread to the conversion of upland stream bottom wetlands, and other unique habitats, some of which are unsuited for this type of plant community.
- 3) Water quality has become degraded in some areas. Sedimentation and thermal pollution have threatened some wildlife species.
- 4) Habitats directly unaffected by conversion have become isolated dramatically reducing some species' mobility and populations.
- 5) Mining operations, urbanization and a variety of other activities have also taken their toll.
- 6) Lack of management/maintenance, of otherwise beneficial practices, has inadvertently negatively impacted native wildlife.

While some conservation programs including, the Forest Incentives Program (FIP), Stewardship Incentives Program (SIP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are available to address needs within the uplands, few address nonproduction areas. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) can be utilized as a tool to mesh with the existing programs complimenting their benefit to wildlife while further reaching the strategically important areas which have been historically unreachable. For example, the importance of riparian buffers is well known and is a priority with the CRP, but if an area lacks cropping history, it may be ineligible in that program.

Habitats of Concern

Within Louisiana's upland wildlife habitat, the WHIP priorities for fiscal year 2006 are as follows: the establishment of riparian buffers, the restoration of longleaf pines and upland hardwoods, the establishment of wildlife corridors, control of cogongrass, and practices which manipulate successional stages or diversify the habitat by producing beneficial native vegetation.

Riparian Buffers

Planting shrubs and trees along waterbodies in open land will significantly enhance riparian areas for wildlife. Food, nesting sites, escape cover, and travel corridors will be provided within areas largely devoid of adequate habitat. Reductions in sedimentation, erosion, and thermal pollution in

the adjacent waterbodies are also expected. Several wildlife species are expected to benefit by this practice including white-tailed deer, northern bobwhite quail, wood ducks, American woodcock, small rodents, several other bird species, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and aquatic invertebrates. The water quality attributes of riparian buffers will benefit several threatened and endangered wildlife species including the inflated heelsplitter, pallid sturgeon and gulf sturgeon, Louisiana pearlshell, bald eagle, and the ringed sawback turtle. The linkage to other essential habitats could also benefit mobile threatened/endangered (or nearly extinct) mammals such as the Louisiana black bear, red wolf and the Florida panther. The enhancement/protection of riparian buffers in woodland/cutover areas is critical to many forest dwelling species. The native soft and hard mast trees and shrubs to be reestablished in riparian zones will provide the food and cover needed for the revival and/or reintroduction of several woodland species in uplands.

Longleaf Pine Woodland

The reestablishment of longleaf pine stands to historic (suitable) sites will aid in the recovery of declining habitat types found within the upland habitat. Whether these trees are restored on the unique longleaf pine wetland savannah ecotypes or the traditional upland longleaf pine/bluestem habitats, they will benefit several wildlife species. In addition to white-tailed deer, northern bobwhite quail, and wild turkey, several non-game species' populations will be enhanced. Among the non-game wildlife, which will benefit from the restoration of this habitat, some are endangered, threatened, or sensitive species which are dependent on historic longleaf pine habitat or the microhabitats which occur within. Examples of these dependent species include Louisiana bluestem, pinewoods bluestem, several asters, and sedges, red wolf, Florida panther, several bats, Bachman's sparrow, American kestrel, loggerhead shrike, red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, Louisiana pine snake, southern red-back salamander, dusky gopher frog, and the American burying beetle.

Upland Hardwood Forests

As with the restoration of longleaf pine habitats, the restoration or inclusion of native upland mast producing hardwood trees within pine production areas or agricultural settings will assist in replacing declining habitats. Traditional oak-pine-hickory stands.

Cogongrass Control

Cogongrass (*Imperata essamine*) is a grassy weed that has become established in some areas across Louisiana. The grass prefers sandy soils with low nutrient levels. There is a potential threat of this becoming established in the historic long leaf pine and other priority habitat areas across the state.

This grass spreads by seed and rhizomes. The mature plant will produce approximately 3000 seeds annually. The seedlings will begin to produce rhizomes within four weeks of germination. These characteristics and the plants ability to out compete other plant species makes this plant very successful in colonizing new areas, and quickly creating monotypic environments once established.

Because of its aggressive, weedy habitat habit in other countries, cogongrass is identified on the Federal Noxious Weeds List. It has been identified as the seventh worst weed in the world.

Louisiana Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Plan

Alluvial Habitat

The Alluvial Wildlife Habitat Area is within the southern Mississippi valley alluvium common resource area. This area is in the natural floodplains of the Mississippi River, Red River and Ouachita River, and covers 9,010,510 acres or 29.49 percent of the state.

Bottomland hardwoods once covered most of the area, however, clearing of forests for agricultural production has removed most of the original hardwood ecosystem. Some relatively large tracts of native habitat remain in national refuges and state wildlife management areas with small remnants of woods scattered throughout the area, but most of the area is now in crop production. The remaining bottomland hardwood tracts provide excellent habitat for both game and non-game wildlife, but the vast areas of cropland lack the habitat elements necessary to support most of the native species.

Bottomland hardwoods provide excellent habitat and support high populations of white-tailed deer, wild turkey, fox and gray squirrels, swamp rabbits, neo-tropical migratory birds, and migratory waterfowl. Threatened and endangered species including the Louisiana black bear, bald eagle, Bachman's warbler, and American alligator also utilize bottomland hardwood habitat. Conversion of the forests to agricultural production also impacted water quality and fisheries resources in the numerous streams and bayous which transect the area. The forested back swamps and wooded riparian zones that filtered pollutants from runoff water disappeared as land was converted to agriculture. The quality of fisheries now found in most alluvial streams is composed only of fish that can tolerate highly turbid water and other pollutants.

Programs such Water Bank, Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Forestry Incentives Program and Stewardship Incentives Program have addressed some of the needs within the alluvium. WHIP can be used to compliment the above mentioned programs as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Partners for Wildlife Program, Ducks Unlimited, Louisiana Waterfowl Program and others.

Habitats of Concern

Within the alluvial area, riparian buffers, wildlife corridors, diversification of existing woodland, and manipulation of plant succession in most soil area, and woodland rights-of-way have been identified as priorities for 2006.

Riparian Buffers / Wildlife Corridors

The trees, shrubs and grasses established on riparian buffers and wildlife corridors will provide food and cover for a variety of wildlife. Fur bearing mammals, including mink, raccoon, fox, coyote, birds of prey, such as the red-shouldered hawk and great horned owl, and prey species such as the hispid cotton rat, and swamp rabbit will all utilize riparian/corridor habitat. These habitats also provide travelways, escape cover, and food for white-tail deer, gray and fox squirrels, and the American woodcock. Bobwhite quail prefer edge cover created along vegetative buffers for food, escape cover and nesting cover. Research has shown that riparian buffers, which connect two wooded tracts, are frequently used for travel corridors by the threatened Louisiana black bear.

Water quality and fisheries will also benefit from riparian vegetation. The vegetation will filter sediment before it reaches the stream and the trees will provide shade and cooler water and cover for fish and other aquatic species.

Vegetation Succession/Habitat Diversification

Many landowners in the alluvial area flood shallow water areas for migratory water fowl during the winter months. Many of these areas grow up in native vegetation and can provide excellent feeding areas for ducks and geese if managed properly. Periodic disking, prescribed burning or bush hogging of moist soil areas is sometimes necessary to reduce competition by nuisance plants, that if left unchecked will dominate the area and eliminate the plants that are preferred waterfowl food. Duck Unlimited and NRCS are currently working to create shallow water areas on thousands of acres in the alluvial area. Using WHIP to encourage proper management of these areas will optimize waterfowl habitat quality in these projects.

Some bottomland hardwood habitats can be enhanced by opening the overstory tree canopy. Dense tree canopies often block sunlight from the forest floor resulting in little food and cover for wildlife dependent upon understory vegetation. The deadening of some trees will allow sunlight to penetrate into the understory and promote the growth of herbaceous plants, shrubs, vines and tree saplings, and leave dead snags for cavity nesters. This will benefit some neo-tropical songbirds, American woodcock, white-tail deer, swamp and cottontail rabbit, Louisiana black bear, and many other forest dwelling species.

Biodiversity can also be improved in some bottomland hardwood habitats by planting shade tolerant mast producing trees and shrubs in strategic locations. The introduction of native soft mast trees and shrubs in small plots will promote the invasion of these species in the area and the ultimate result will be better habitat for wildlife.

Disking on utility rights-of-way will set back plant succession and encourage the growth of grasses and herbs beneficial to wildlife. This will serve as excellent habitat for wild turkey, swamp and cottontail rabbits, and bobwhite quail. Rights-of-way disked through wet areas will promote the growth of grasses and forbs favored by waterfowl.

Louisiana Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Plan

Prairie Habitat

The prairies of southwestern Louisiana were the last of the great regions of the state to become “truly settled.” Major changes to the landscape began taking place around 1882 when the Southern Pacific Railroad was completed to establish through transportation between the prairies and the outside world. The area now makes a significant contribution to the state’s agricultural economy via rice and cattle production.

Louisiana prairies were historically tallgrass prairies interspersed with trees found in nine parishes along the southwestern Louisiana Gulf Coast. They were flanked by the Calcasieu River basin to the west and the Atchafalaya River basin to the east. To the south the prairies blended with freshwater marshes. The northern extent of its occurrence was fringed by flatwoods. Prior to conversion, prairies covered approximately 1,513,300 acres or 4.96 percent of the state. Less than 100 acres of unaltered prairie habitat remains in Louisiana today.

Plant life in the prairies is very diverse and unique. Native prairie grasses are wetland plants, including some fresh marsh species. Dominant grasses include the closely related bluestem and broomsedge, vase-grass (watergrass), switchgrass, and eastern gamma-grass. Carpetgrass and Johnsongrass have been introduced to the prairies. Prairie soils once supported a wide variety and abundance of wild flowers.

The prairies naturally occurred between the woods marking the stream courses. Trees growing alongside the stream courses include oak, elm, ash, and cottonwood. Fires, high summer evaporation, claypan, “too-wet-too-dry” soil conditions, are all suspected as limiting factors restricting tree growth on prairies.

Prairie wildlife is similar but different from other habitat types occurring in the state. The mere fact that two habitat types—prairie and wooded stream courses—dotting the landscape in a systematic pattern, makes it possible for both woodland and grassland species to meet their habitat needs. From a wildlife habitat perspective, prairies are very important to grassland bird species.

Habitat conversion to other land uses has caused a significant decline in the quality and quantity of wildlife food and cover. Grassland wildlife, especially birds, is usually unable to adapt to changes in land use. Practices that improve food and cover need to be applied to the landscape.

Habitats of Concern

Within the prairie area, the establishment of riparian buffers, wildlife corridors, native prairie grasses, and the management of moist-soil areas have been identified as priorities for fiscal year 2006.

Rare Native Habitats – Prairies

Prairie restoration would most likely be accomplished by targeting small 5 to 20 acre tracts of converted prairie lands. Vegetative plantings consisting of native species such as bluestem, switchgrass, and eastern gammagrass would be planted and maintained for at least a 10-year period.

Riparian Buffer and Streamside Corridors

The numerous streams criss-crossing the prairies CRA provide an opportunity for riparian restoration and enhancement. Riparian zones can be improved by planting trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants alongside the streams to provide food and cover for wildlife. This practice will also help improve the water quality of the area.

Field Borders and Odd Areas

Since many of the agricultural fields are rather large homogeneous sites, field borders and odd areas can be established to restore wildlife habitats. These practices would benefit quail, songbirds, and many species of small mammals.

Vegetative Succession Manipulation—Moist Soil Area

An effective management practice for improving waterbird habitat in the prairies CRA is to disturb the soils of a shallow-water pond. Disking and burning are two proven methods of moist-soil management used to encourage the growth of native plant species. Moist-soil areas are especially attractive to waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.

Louisiana Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Plan

Coastal Marsh Habitat

The gulf coast marshes of Louisiana mark the transition from land to sea. The marshes or coastal wetlands of Louisiana encompass 5,004,600 acres or 16.38 percent of the state. Four distinct marsh types have been identified and are classified as salt, brackish, intermediate, and fresh. The marsh types are characterized by associations of plant species, hydrological patterns, soils, and fish and wildlife resources.

Coastal marshes in Louisiana provide habitat for many species of wildlife. Millions of waterbirds either winter in coastal marshes or pass through on their way to traditional wintering grounds. The Louisiana coastal marshes are of great importance to migratory waterfowl and provide winter habitat for more than two-thirds of the entire Mississippi flyway waterfowl population. Coastal wetlands also support over half of the continental mottled duck populations. Also, a large portion of the fur and alligator harvest in North America, and more than 20 percent of the country's commercial fisheries, are provided by the coastal marshes.

The bald eagle nests adjacent to the coastal marshes of the state. Other listed species dependent on the coastal wetlands for their existence include the eskimo curlew, arctic peregrine falcon, brown pelican, and piping plover.

Hydrologic alterations such as the construction of canals and the leveeing of major rivers have been occurring in the marsh for many years. As a result of these activities, saltwater intrusion and marsh erosion is "eating away" at these valuable coastal wetland habitats. As marsh loss continues, the quantity and quality of choice food and cover plants decreases also.

Habitat of Concern

Steps are being taken throughout coastal Louisiana to help restore and enhance the coastal marshes. Many of these efforts involve water management to prevent further damage by saltwater and marsh erosion. After the hydrology has been restored to the extent practicable, native vegetation is often planted to slow down erosion and stabilize the fragile marsh soils. These newly established native plant communities expand over time to provide fish and wildlife preferred habitat.

The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA-PL 646), commonly referred to as the Breaux-Johnston Act, is one of the major programs underway to restore, protect, and enhance coastal marshes. It is a partnership between the federal government and the state of Louisiana. WHIP could possibly partner with CWPPRA to facilitate the establishment of native vegetation in degraded coastal marshes.

Appendix A

WHIP Ranking Form and Instructions

WHIP FY 2006 RANKING FORM

LANDOWNER NAME: _____

APPLICATION NUMBER: _____

APPLICATION DATE: _____

DC SIGNATURE: _____

RARE AND DECLINING HABITAT RESTORATION			
HABITAT TYPE	ACRES RESTORED	YES/NO	SCORE
Longleaf Pine			0
Upland/Bottomland Hardwoods			0
Mixed Hardwood/Pine			0
Baldcypress			0
Water Tupelo			0
Baldcypress/Water Tupelo			0
Native Grasses/Forbs			0
Riparian Buffer / Wildlife Corridor			0
Water Quality (305B Report)			0
State Designated Scenic Stream			0
SUBTOTAL:			#Value

HABITAT ENHANCEMENT/MANAGEMENT		
PRACTICE/METHOD	ACRES TREATED	SCORE
Vegetation Succession - Prescribed burning		0
Vegetation Succession - Marsh burning		0
Vegetation Succession - Mechanical (mowing/disking)		0
Vegetation Succession - Chemical		0
Shallow water area (creation)		0
Wildlife Watering Facility (creation)		0
Invasive (Cogongrass) Suppression		0
Marsh "edge" – Streambank and Shoreline Protection		0
Habitat Diversification – establishment or creation		0
SUBTOTAL:		#Value

BONUS	CODE or YEARS	SCORE
T&E (RCW or O)		0
Compliment Existing Initiative		0
Contract Length (5-15 years)		0
Conversion Bonus (Ag to Wildlife)		0
SUBTOTAL:		#Value

Total Ranking Score:	#Value
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Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Ranking Form Instructions

FY 2005

All WHIP applications will be ranked using the following procedure. Each WHIP application will be ranked using the electronic version provided to you by the State Office. Each ranking form is divided into three parts (rare and declining habitats factors, habitat enhancement / management factors and bonus point factors). In addition to the following instructions, **reference the WHIP Application Ranking Guidelines**.

Step 1: For those habitat types listed under **RARE AND DECLINING HABITAT RESTORATION** section, determine which of the habitats are planned to be restored. Insert the acres of habitat planned for restoration in the **ACRES RESTORED COLUMN**. It is permissible to rank multiple habitat types. Answer YES or NO to: Establishment of Riparian Buffer / Wildlife Corridor; 305B designation; and, Located within drainage area of a Scenic Stream. If you plan to install only wildlife habitat enhancement/management practices go to step 2.

For example:

A landowner has applied to restore 10 acres of longleaf pine, 5 acres of upland hardwoods, and 2 acres of mixed baldcypress/water tupelo. Insert **10** in the **ACRES RESTORED** column for longleaf pine, **5** in the **ACRES RESTORED** column for upland hardwoods, and **2** in the **ACRES RESTORED** column for baldcypress/water tupelo.

Step 2: Follow these instructions if you have planned WHIP practices to enhance/manage existing wildlife habitat. For the WHIP practices/methods listed under the **HABITAT ENHANCEMENT/MANAGEMENT** section, insert the acres treated in the **ACRES TREATED** column. It is permissible to rank multiple practices/methods.

For example:

A landowner has applied for cost-share assistance to implement the following WHIP habitat enhancement practices:

- Burn 10 acres of existing longleaf pine according the prescribed burn criteria listed under the WHIP ranking guidelines.
- Burn 40 acres of existing loblolly pine according to the prescribe burn criteria listed under the WHIP ranking guidelines.
- Strip-disk 2 acres to improve bobwhite quail habitat.
- Chemically treat 5 acres of an existing ROW to increase the diversity and density of native grasses.
- Disk an existing 10 acre shallow water area (SWA) to encourage the establishment and growth of food-producing annuals for waterfowl.
- Construct a 10 acre shallow water area (SWA)

Insert **50** (10+40) in the **ACRES TREATED** column for **Prescribed burning**, **12** in the **ACRES TREATED** column **Mechanical (bushhogging, disking)**, **5** in the for **ACRES TREATED** column for **Chemical**, and **10** in the **ACRES TREATED** column for **Shallow water area (creation)**.

Step 3: Determine if any of the following bonuses apply:

- For **T&E** bonus, check the T&E maps in Appendix B of the WHIP handbook and insert **RCW** (red-cockaded woodpecker) if the practice(s) you are planning directly benefits RCW's. Insert an **O**, as in other, if the practice(s) are directly benefiting any other species listed in the matrix.
- For **Compliment Existing Initiative** bonus, check WHIP ranking guideline #11 (compliment existing initiative eligibility list) and insert the appropriate letter(s). Leave blank if none.
- For **Contract Length** bonus, insert the length of the contract in years.
- If agricultural land (pastureland, hayland, or cropland) is being converted to wildlife land answer **yes** under **Conversion Bonus**.

WHIP Application Ranking Guidelines:

1) Longleaf Pine establishment:

- a. A forest management plan approved by NRCS and to be implemented by the participant is required to be eligible for cost-share funds.
- b. Authorized for the conversion of **only** cropland, pastureland, or hayland that is suitable for the establishment of a stand of longleaf pine as described in Practice Code 612 – Tree and Shrub Establishment. These longleaf pine plantings may include hardwood plantings on “bottom” areas adjacent to permanent or intermittent streams or bodies of water. However, these hardwood areas are **only** authorized for up to 10% of the longleaf pine acres.
- c. Authorized for reforestation of wooded/cutover areas **only** when establishing a stand of Longleaf Pine on areas where longleaf pine historically grew. These longleaf pine plantings may include hardwood plantings on “bottom” areas adjacent to permanent or intermittent streams or bodies of water. However, these hardwood areas are **only** authorized for up to 10% of the longleaf pine acres.

2) Hardwood establishment:

- a. A forest management plan approved by NRCS and to be implemented by the participant is required to be eligible for cost-share funds.
- b. Authorized **only** for the conversion of cropland, pastureland, or hayland that is suitable for the establishment of a stand of Upland or Bottomland Hardwoods, Baldcypress, or Water Tupelo as described in Practice Code 612 – Tree and Shrub Establishment. Upland hardwood plantings may include a mixture of pine plantings. However, the hardwood to pine ratio will not exceed that of historical natural conditions (i.e. 80% hardwoods – 20% loblolly pine). The hardwood/pine mixture is limited to a minimum of 70% hardwoods that is beneficial to wildlife. The hardwood/pine mixture will **not** exceed 30% pine.
- c. Cypress Break Wetland Restoration is considered an important habitat component of the bottomland hardwood wetland ecosystems for the State of Louisiana. Projects will be eligible for cost-share when the following conditions are met:
 - The site is a degraded cypress brake, and
 - The soil class is either a 5W or 7W,

3) Native Grass/Forb establishment:

- a. Suitable historic native prairie sites can be planted with an approved diverse mixture of perennial “native” grasses and forbs provided a needs assessment determines plantings are practical and likely to succeed. Prescribed burning and/or grazing/mowing will be planned components needed to control exotic infestations such as Chinese tallow trees, and maintain native herbaceous stands.

4) Riparian Buffer / Wildlife Corridor establishment:

- a. YES = Riparian Buffers / Wildlife Corridors established as per the provisions for Tree and Shrub Establishment and Native Grass/Forb (Conservation Cover) Establishment.
- b. Riparian Buffers will follow FOTG, Section IV, practice standards for Riparian Forest Buffer (391). The definition of riparian forest buffer is an area of trees or shrubs located

adjacent to and up gradient from waterbodies (i.e., streams, bayous, lakes, ponds, etc.). A minimum of at least three tree species, suitable to the site, will be used.

- c. Wildlife corridors are habitats established to suitable native or approved vegetation (trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants) to facilitate wildlife travel, food, and cover needs. Wildlife corridors are divided into three types:
 - **Watercourse corridors** are similar to riparian buffers however the restored area is not up gradient from the waterbodies, and therefore provide less immediate water filtering effects. Corridors may be from one to five chains in width and can be composed of herbaceous and woody cover.
 - **Field borders** are suitable sites immediately adjacent to cropland or hayland. Field borders in openland are also subject to the five chain maximum width with no length limitation.
 - **Odd areas within openland** address other sites not necessarily immediately bordering cropland or pasture but within open areas (i.e., old home sites, areas used to square off fields, etc.). Odd areas in openland are subject to the five chain maximum width with no length limitation.

5) Water Quality (305B Report):

- a. YES = Offered acres are within the drainage area of a stream segment or waterbody that is designated by the State Water Quality Management Plan (305(b) report) as “Not Fully Supported” its designated use due to agriculture, AND, the cost-shared treatment will improve the water quality of runoff from the offered acres.

6) State Designated Scenic Stream:

- a. YES = Offered acres are within the drainage area of a scenic stream (that portion designated by the State as scenic), and the cost-shared treatment will reduce non-point-source pollution.

7) Vegetation Succession:

- a. Vegetation succession manipulation is the use of prescribed burning, mowing, disking, or chemical application to set back succession of native plant communities in order to promote the growth of beneficial herbaceous vegetation for wildlife food and cover.
- b. Specific existing stands of southern pine tree species are eligible for recurring cost share assistance to set back plant community succession:
 - i. Practices:
 - 1. Prescribed burning
 - 2. Strip disking.
 - 3. Chemical treatment
 - ii. Site eligibility:
 - 1. Pine stands containing loblolly, short leaf, and/or slash must be 15-20 years in age and have a basal area below 70, or
 - 2. older than 20 years with a basal area below 80.

- c. Longleaf pine stands are eligible for cost share assistance for prescribed burning when:
 - i. The majority of the stand have reached root collar diameter of one half inch, but not when more than 15% of the stand has initiated height growth, and
 - ii. The stand is either less than 16 inches or more than 20 inches tall.

NOTE: Burning during the early growing season is preferred to stimulate height growth and reduce hardwood competition in long leaf pine forests.

- d. Utility rights of way throughout forested areas are eligible for recurring cost share assistance for disking to set back plant succession where a needs determination concludes erosion is not likely. Planting native forbs such as partridge pea are also eligible for cost share assistance where site conditions permit.
- e. Moist soil units can be enhanced by periodic disking, burning, and bush-hogging to remove undesirable plants species and along with water management to encourage beneficial herbaceous species.
- f. “Brackish” Marsh is eligible for vegetation succession manipulation by the use of Prescribed burning for the purpose of habitat and food source enhancement and is limited to the following conditions:
 - i) One burn every three years and no more than 4 burns in a 10 year span.
 - ii) A maximum of 500 acres per application / contract.

8) Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife (creation):

- a. Cost-share **is not authorized** for the construction of dikes and/or installation of water control structures in fields that are used for the commercial production of rice.
- b. Eligible on any open land (cropland, pastureland, hayland) within any habitat type with no size limitation other than the financial limit of the application.
- c. Constructed utilizing the dike (357) and structure for water control (587) specifications.
- d. Will be required to hold water from October 15 through March 15 for the life of the contract.
- e. Cost-share assistance will be available to pump water for early migrant waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds, to a maximum total depth of 12 inches into the shallow water area from August 1 to September 15, annually.
 - i. This assistance is available as a one time effort per year,
 - ii. Rice fields are eligible for flooding assistance if these fields are rolled, water buffaloed, or lightly disked prior to flooding, and
 - iii. Water in rice fields must be held until January 15, annually.

9) Wildlife Watering Facility (creation):

- a. Authorized for the construction of Pond (378). Cost-share limited to \$3,000.
- b. Ponds that are located on cropland, pastureland, or hayland, must have a buffer of at least one chain in width from the waterline established and maintained to wildlife beneficial trees/shubs and/or perennial native herbaceous vegetation. The buffer area and the pond must be fenced to exclude livestock when located on a grazing land unit. Ponds will not be used for watering livestock.

10) Invasive (Cogongrass) Suppression:

- a. Cogongrass suppression will be eligible for cost-share through Pest Management (595) when the following conditions are met:
 - The site is located within a habitat of special concern, and
 - Cogongrass has been positively identified,

11) Marsh “edge” Streambank and Shoreline Protection:

- a. Edge protection in marsh areas refers to shoreline vegetative plantings for habitat protection and erosion control. Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580) practice standards will be used.

12) Habitat Diversification – establishment or creation:

- a. Tree and Shrub Establishment on Woodland openings (i.e., logging decks, logging roads, etc.)
- b. Tree and Shrub Establishment on damaged woodlands (i.e., small areas damaged by pine beetles, fire, or ice. etc.)
- c. Establishing food producing trees and shrubs (i.e. persimmon, mayhaw, etc.) on small area of woodland cutovers where planting food producing trees and shrubs are practical and beneficial.
- d. Creation of woodland openings in Situations when there is very little understory cover or existing snags.
 - Openings can be between ½ to 2 acres in size per forty acres of dominant tree species,
 - The majority of subdominant trees within the proposed opening will be chemically deadened to achieve the opening, and
 - There is a limit of 10 openings per WHIP contract.

13) Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) bonus:

- a. For **T&E** bonus, check the T&E maps in Appendix E of the WHIP handbook and insert **RCW** (red-cockaded woodpecker) if the practice(s) you are planning directly benefits RCW's. Insert an **O**, as in other, if the practice(s) are directly benefiting any other species listed in the matrix.

14) Compliment Existing Initiative bonus:

- a. WHIP practices planned adjacent to or in conjunction with the at least one of following programs or initiatives:
 - A. Wetland Reserve Program (adjacent)
 - B. Conservation Reserve Program (adjacent)
 - C. Forest Incentives Program (adjacent)
 - D. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (adjacent)
 - E. Forest Stewardship Program (adjacent)
 - F. Partners for Fish and Wildlife (adjacent or same acreage)
 - G. Louisiana Waterfowl Project (adjacent or same acreage)
 - H. National Conservation Buffer Initiative (riparian or watercourse corridors)
 - I. Sustainable Forest Initiative (adjacent)
 - J. Louisiana Natural Areas Registry (adjacent or same acreage)
 - K. Forestland Enhancement Program (adjacent or same acreage)

- L. Louisiana Forestry Productivity Program (adjacent or same acreage)
- M. Restoring the Delta (adjacent or same acreage)
- N. Heritage Program (adjacent or same acreage)
- O. Conservation Security Program (adjacent or same acreage)
- P. Wildlife Management Area, National Wildlife Refuge, Federal & State Parks

12) Contract Length (5 – 15 years) bonus:

- a. Priority will be given to WHIP contracts with longer contact lengths. Listed below are point values assigned to contract lengths exceeding the five-year minimum.

6 years = 5 points	11 years = 30 points
7 years = 10 points	12 years = 35 points
8 years = 15 points	13 years = 40 points
9 years = 20 points	14 years = 45 points
10 years = 25 points	15 years = 50 points

13) Conversion (Agriculture to Wildlife) bonus:

- a. WHIP project sites that are currently in cropland, pasture, hayland, or any form of openland (containing no trees, woody brush, stumps or saplings), and the majority (i.e., greater than 50%) of the project acreage will be established to a mixture of site suitable tree species.

Appendix B

WHIP Assessment Forms & Instructions

Wildlife Habitat Objectives Form

FY 2005

Habitat Type & Acres (1)	Wildlife Objectives (2)	Habitat Element (3) Objectives	Habitat Component (4) Objectives
Riparian Buffer Establishment			
Rare/Native Habitat Restoration			
Cypress Brake Restoration			
Wildlife Corridor Establishment			
Vegetation Succession Manipulation			
Habitat Diversification			

Habitat Objectives Form

Instructions

2005

1. Habitat Type & Acres – This column identifies the applicable habitat type (as listed on the WHIP ranking form) and amount in acres which will be established or enhanced by the wildlife habitat development plan. For example, if an upland cropland area has been restored to a five-acre riparian buffer, upland cropland 5 acres would be inserted under the riparian buffer establishment column heading.

2. Wildlife Objectives – This column identifies the wildlife species or wildlife group targeted by the wildlife habitat development plan. Specific game species and/or specific threatened or endangered species may be targeted. Some possible entries for example are: neotropical migratory songbirds, resident songbirds, resident game & non-game species, threatened & endangered species, migratory waterfowl, wading birds, raptors, reptiles, amphibians, stream fisheries, Louisiana black bear, red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, Bachman's warbler, Louisiana pearlshell mussel, inflated heelsplitter mussel, bald eagle, sea turtles, ringed sawback turtle, peregrine falcon, brown pelican, Florida panther, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, etc.

3. Habitat Element Objectives – This column identifies the applicable habitat elements planned to enhance or create habitat for the targeted wildlife. Possible habitat element objectives could include: foraging habitat, escape cover, brood habitat, roosting habitat, nesting cover, travel lanes, perches, water, spatial habitat requirements, water quality, filter, endangered ecosystems.

4. Habitat Component Objectives – This column identifies the actual component(s) planned to achieve the habitat elements for the targeted species. Percentages should be included with each component. Examples of listed components include: hard mast producing trees, soft mast producing trees, longleaf pine, shrubs, grasses, native prairie grasses, forbs, legumes, woody vines, prescribed burning, prescribed grazing, bush-hogging, openings, disking, watering facilities, etc.

**Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Wildlife Habitat Assessment
Habitat Impacts Form
FY 2005**

HABITAT TYPE	Base Line	Year:		Year:		Year:		Year:	
	Hab.(3) Quality	Hab.(3) Quality	Net Ch(4) (Qual +/-)	Hab.(3) Qual.	Net Ch(4) (Qual +/-)	Hab.(3) Qual.	Net Ch(4) (Qual +/-)	Hab.(3) Qual.	Net Ch(4) (Qual +/-)
Riparian Buffer Establishment									
Rare/Native Habitat Restoration									
Wildlife Corridor Establishment									
Vegetation Succession Mgmt									
Habitat Diversification									

Management Recommendations (5)

YEAR:

YEAR:

YEAR:

YEAR:

YEAR:

Habitat Impacts Form

Instructions

1. Habitat Type – This column identifies the applicable habitat type (as listed on the WHIP ranking form and column 1 of the Habitat Objectives form) and acres which will be established or enhanced by the wildlife habitat development plan.

2. Baseline Habitat Quality – This column identifies the numerical score of the existing conditions of the WHIP project site. This number, ranging from 1 to 4, will be determined by the procedures listed below for the applicable practice. The baseline assessment is completed when the WHIP contact begins and prior to any planned practice installation.

WHIP Numerical Score

Excellent.....	4
Good.....	3
Fair.....	2
Poor.....	1

3. Habitat Quality – This column identifies the numerical score of the habitat conditions during a certain year after the wildlife habitat development plan has been initiated. The number, ranging from 1 to 4, will be determined by the same procedures used to assess the baseline conditions. The year of this assessment should be recorded on the habitat impacts form next to the appropriate score.

4. Net Change – This column identifies the difference, in a numerical score, between the baseline conditions and the habitat quality. This change in score reflects the change in habitat quality between those sampling periods. This score will be calculated by subtracting the baseline score from the habitat quality score.

Management Recommendations – Document if current habitat management strategies are satisfactory. If not satisfactory, recommend alternatives to improve the situation.

WHIP Assessment Procedures

The habitat quality will be evaluated by ocularly estimating the wildlife habitat quality before the installation of any conservation practices (i.e., baseline) and then throughout the life span of the WHIP contract. At a minimum, three assessments will be conducted on the WHIP contract: 1) baseline, 2) after practices are installed, and 3) prior to contract expiration.

The habitat quality for baseline conditions and subsequent years will be assessed by ocularly estimating the wildlife habitat quality and comparing the habitat components established as a result of WHIP with the habitat component objectives in the wildlife habitat development plan (WHDP).

The size of sampling plots for woody, herbaceous, and openings will be that area immediately surrounding the sample point that can be visually detected and ocularly estimated (i.e. as far as the eye can see).

The following table will be used to assign a numeric score based on the percentage of beneficial or desirable species found within the sample plots. The LA-CPA-33A (Tree and Shrub Planting Compliance Record) can be used to record these findings.

Table 1. Numerical rating of wildlife habitat quality.

% Desirable Species	Numerical Score	Habitat Quality
> 70%	4	Excellent
60 – 69%	3	Good
50 – 59%	2	Fair
0 – 49%	1	Poor

To determine the number of sample plots on WHIP lands supporting heterogeneous wildlife habitat, divide the assessment area into 5-acre quadrants. For large WHIP tracts containing homogenous wildlife habitat, the minimum requirement is 1 sample plot per every 25 acres of habitat. A quadrant should not be less than 330 feet wide. Use the WHIP plan map to establish a permanent transect by marking a diagonal line across each 5-acre quadrant. At the midpoint of the transect line establish a sample point at which you will estimate the habitat quality of the WHIP lands. Walk the transect line noting the habitat conditions. At the predetermined sample point (midpoint), make an ocular estimate of the habitat quality by visually inspecting the habitat while turning a complete circle. Record the appropriate numerical score from Table 1 on the Habitat Impacts Form.

612 Tree/Shrub Establishment

Hardwood trees and shrubs will be planted on 12X12 spacing (302) per acre, and longleaf pine will be planted on 10X10 spacing (435) per acre. Habitat quality will depend on the number of desirable tree/shrub species detected. Desirable is defined as the habitat component planted plus any beneficial native species that subsequently establish within the sample site. Beneficial native invaders can be hard or soft mast producing species that add to the diversity of the area and have a beneficial impact toward the wildlife/habitat component objectives. These species could be woody species listed on the WHIP cost share practice sheet suited to the site, or other species determined beneficial by a NRCS or partner biologist.

327 Conservation Cover, 645 Wildlife Upland Habitat Management, 644 Wildlife Wetland Habitat Management, 657 Wetland Development or Restoration, 386 Field Border

Assessments of restored prairie, enhanced moist soil areas, and plant community succession manipulation within existing pine stands or on utility rights of way (ROWs) will be assigned a numeric score based on the percentage of desirable vegetative species found in the sample sites. Desirable vegetation is defined as the habitat component planted (if applicable) plus any beneficial native species that may also establish with the sample site. Examples of desirable or beneficial vegetative species are listed below per habitat.

Moist Soil Areas	Native Prairie	Pine Forest / Right of Ways
smartweeds	showy primrose	beggarticks
wild millets	prairie blazing star	partridge pea

spike rush	black-eyed Susan	little bluestem
panicums	lance-leafed coreopsis	honeysuckle
yellow/purple nutsedges	Mexican hat	golden rods
paspalums	gayfeathers	ragweeds
	eastern Jessamine	switchgrass
	coneflowers	lespedezas
	big bluestem	prairie grasses
	little bluestem	
	Indian grass	
	switch grass	

***** Others as determined by NRCS or a WHIP partner biologist*****

645 Wildlife Upland Habitat Management, 644 Wildlife Wetland Habitat Management

Assessment of areas where the canopy in upland or wetland forested areas has been opened to improve vegetation used for food and/or cover within the understory will be assigned a numeric score based on the percentage of desirable vegetative species found in the sample sites. Desirable vegetation is defined as the habitat component planned to occur on the site. Examples of desirable or beneficial vegetative species are listed below per stratum within the habitat.

Vines	Shrubs/Trees	Herbaceous
honeysuckle	arrowwood	beggarticks
greenbriars	french mulberry	prairie grasses
blackberries	dogwoods	smartweeds
muscadines	hawthorns	wild millets
yellow jessamine	sparkleberry	lespedezas
rattanvine	oak species	partridge pea

*****Others as determined by NRCS or a WHIP partner biologist*****

580 Stream and Shoreline Protection

Assessments of vegetative planting for edge protection will be assigned a numeric score based on the percent of the area sampled containing desirable or beneficial vegetation. Desirable vegetation is defined as the habitat component planted plus any other vegetative species capable of achieving the desired objective that may become established within the sample site. Table 1 will be used to assign a numeric score based on the percentage of the area established to desirable habitat components.

648 Wildlife Watering Facility

A numerical score of 4 will be assigned to any wildlife watering facility that meets the eligibility criteria for WHIP and provides a perennial water supply all year. For eligible wildlife watering facilities that do not provide perennial water supply all year for any reason, a score of 1, will be assigned.

Numerical scores for all practice assessments will be placed in the appropriate Habitat Quality column as footnoted by 2 or 3 for the applicable year. In subsequent years the net increase or decrease from baseline conditions will be recorded in the Net Change column as footnoted by 4. This score will be calculated by subtracting the baseline score from the applicable habitat quality score.

Appendix C

Cost Share Practices Rates and Provisions

Maximum Cost-Share Rates

A. Maximum Cost-Share Rates and Incentives

Practice Name	Unit	Practice Code	Cost/Share Rate (%)
Conservation Cover	Ac.	327	75
Critical Area Planting	Ac.	342	75
Dike	Ft.	356	75
Early Secessional Habitat Management	Ac.	647	75
Fence	Ft.	382	75
Field Border	Ft.	386	75
Fire Break	Ft.	394	75
Filter Strip	Ac.	393	75
Forest Site Preparation	Ac.	490	75
Forest Stand Improvement	Ac.	666	75
Forest Trails and Landings	Ac.	655	75
Heavy Use Area Protection	Ac.	561	75
Mulching	Ac.	484	75
Pest Management	Ac.	595	75
Pipeline	Ft.	516	75
Pond ¹	No.	378	75
Prescribed Burning ²	Ac.	338	75
Pumping Plant	Ea.	533	75
Riparian Forest Buffer	Ac.	391	See Companion Practices
Shallow Water Management For Wildlife	Ac.	646	75
Streambank & Shoreline Protection	Ft.	580	75
Structure for Water Control	No.	587	75
Tree/Shrub Establishment	Ac.	612	75
Use Exclusion	Ft.	472	See Companion Practices
Watering Facility	Ea.	614	75

These practices are eligible for on-going cost-share assistance.

¹ Maximum cost-share assistance is \$3000/pond/contact.

² Maximum cost-share assistance for marsh burning is 50% of the state wide average cost list.

CONSERVATION COVER 327

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to control erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife food and cover, by establishing and maintaining permanent vegetative cover.
- B. **Apply** this practice to establish perennial native herbaceous vegetative on eligible land adjacent to watercourses or on open land where there is a need to provide herbaceous buffers/corridors, cover, food or shelter for wildlife.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-share is authorized for conversion of cropland, idle cropland, pastureland, harvested forestland, hayfields, aquaculture ponds (catfish, minnow, crawfish, etc.) to perennial “native” herbaceous vegetation. Idle cropland for this purpose is defined as land that has had some management activity (i.e. mowing, disking, burning, etc.) within the past five years.
 - 2) Cost-share is authorized for establishment of Riparian Herbaceous Cover adjacent to ponds, shallow water areas, and other water bodies.
 - 3) Cost-share is authorized for establishment of Zone 3 or Riparian Forest Buffer.
 - 4) Cost-share is authorized for fertilizer, lime, seedbed preparation, eligible seed, and planting.
 - a. **“Native” species - Fertilizer:** Cost-share may be authorized, when needed, for a quantity of nutrients (Phosphorous (P) and Potassium (K)) within the minimum and maximum application range established by the district conservationist in accordance with the NRCS FOTG and in consultation with the NRCS state agronomist. A soil test is **not** required. For “native” grass, forb, and legume plantings, Nitrogen (N) is not recommended and will not be planned. Nitrogen and Lime application is **not** authorized for cost-share and will not be required. Maximum Phosphorous and Potassium application for “native” plantings will not exceed (P) 60 lbs/acre and (K) 60 lbs/acre.
 - b. **Eligible Seed:** Cost-share is on a Pure Live Seed (PLS) basis. Seed and Rate must meet specifications as listed in Practice (327) Conservation Cover, Standards and Specifications of the FOTG. Inoculation of legume seed is required. Contact state office technical staff (Plant Material Specialist or Wildlife Biologist) for recommended inoculates of native species.
 - 5) Cost-share is authorized for Pre-Plant Herbicide Treatment **only** when needed and **only** for establishing “native” herbaceous vegetation. Level of treatment will be based on the following category descriptions. Chemicals used in performing this practice must be federally, state and locally registered and must be applied in accordance with authorized registered uses, label directions, and other federal and state requirements and policies.
 - a. **“Light Weed Competition”** is defined as: 1) **“annual”** grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush - stocking less than 100 stems per acre and height less than 12 inches; OR, a combination of both 1) and 2).
 - b. **“Medium Weed Competition”** is defined as having at least one of the following: 1) **“perennial”** grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush – stocking 100 to 300 stems per acre or height 12 to 24 inches.

CONSERVATION COVER (327)

6) Cost-sharing is **not authorized** for:

- a. Establishment of “annual” food plots or any annual or introduced species.
- b. Clearing of rocks or other obstructions from the area to be seeded.
- c. Fencing
- d. Converting land that is considered “wetlands” (i.e. crawfish ponds that are not annually tilled) under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
- e. Converting land from a stand of manageable or partially manageable timber or pulpwood or has had a stand of manageable or partially manageable timber or pulpwood **after December 23, 1985** to a grass or legume cover. A "manageable stand" is defined as a stand of trees that has adequate stocking for management, good health, vigorous growth, and has not reached its optimum value.

7) Consideration should be given to the needs of wildlife when determinations as to seed varieties and other practice specifications are made.

D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 3 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.

E. **Specifications** - This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Conservation Cover (327); and if applicable, Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390).

F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**

- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

CRITICAL AREA PLANTING 342

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to reduce erosion and the pollution of land, water, or air from sediment of agricultural or silvicultural origin.
- B. **Apply** this practice to critical areas (such as gullies, roadsides, field borders, levees, dikes, and similar problem areas) on habitat restoration sites that are susceptible to erosion and/or where runoff carrying substantial amounts of sediment constitutes a significant pollution hazard.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) **Cost-sharing is authorized for:**
 - a. Grading, shaping and filling, the establishment of grasses (including filter strips), trees or shrubs, and similar measures which are practical for the solution of the problem.
 - b. Mulching, seedbed preparation, seed, planting, fertilizer and lime. Pelletized lime may be used with Critical Area Planting (342) when determined needed by the district conservationist.
 - c. **Fertilizer and Lime:** Cost-shares may be approved for a quantity of nutrients (N, P, K) and/or lime within the minimum and maximum application recommended by a current soil test (taken within the past 3 years) for the targeted species and treatment. **The soil test results must be provided to NRCS in order for the application to be considered eligible and prior to ranking the application.** In the case of “planned” newly constructed areas, such as earthwork on dikes, ponds, and critical areas, the quantity shall be within a minimum and maximum application range established by the district conservationist in accordance with the NRCS FOTG and/or in consultation with the NRCS state agronomist. Cost-shared quantity will not exceed 100 lbs of N / acre, or 2 tons Lime / acre. Pelletized lime may be used for Critical Area Planting ONLY. Liming materials should be applied and worked into the soil well in advance or at the time of seeding.
 - d. **Eligible Seed:** Cost-share is on a Pure Live Seed (PLS) basis. Seed and Rate must meet specifications as listed in Practice (342) Critical Area Planting, Standards and Specifications of the FOTG. Inoculation of legume seed is recommended.
 - e. Protective fencing, if *used primarily* to solve the problem.
 - f. Installing runoff control measures on public roadsides only where such measures are essential to solve a farm-based pollution problem.
 - 2) Consideration should be given to the needs of wildlife and enhancing the appearance of the area when establishing the protective measures.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 10 years after the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications**
- 1) This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Critical Area Planting (342); and if applicable, Mulching (484); and (Use Exclusion) Fence (382).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to protect land against overflow or to regulate water.
- B. **Apply** this practice to eligible land to control water for wildlife management purposes.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for clearing and in-place earth fill, mulching, and critical area planting.
 - 2) Cost-sharing is **not** authorized for the construction of dikes for purposes other than fish and wildlife management.
 - 3) Cost-sharing is authorized **only** for the construction of dikes used exclusively for the development of Shallow Water Management for Wildlife (646).
 - 4) Cost-sharing is **not** authorized for construction of dikes used for aquaculture (catfish, crayfish, or minnow production).
 - 5) Cost-share is **not** authorized for the construction of dikes in fields that are used for the commercial production of rice.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice shall be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 20 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications**
- 1) This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the FOTG; Practice 356, Dike; and Practice 342, Critical Area Planting.
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share:**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

EARLY SECESSIONAL HABITAT DEVELOPMENT / MANAGEMENT (647)

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to increase plant community diversity, provide wildlife or aquatic habitat for early secessional species, and provide habitat for declining species.
- B. **Apply** this practice on all eligible lands that are suitable for the type of habitat that is needed within the range of the desired species or the natural community under consideration.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) **Recurring** cost-share funds are authorized for mowing, strip-disking, or chemical applications to set back plant succession or manipulate dense mid/overstory allowing more diverse understory in accordance with the NRCS FOTG, Section IV, Early Secessional Habitat Development and Management (647), and Wildlife Upland Habitat Management (645).
 - 2) Cost-share funds are authorized on pine stands containing loblolly, shortleaf, and/or slash ***only*** when the stand is 15-20 years in age and has a basal area below 70, or is older than 20 years with a basal area below 80.
 - 3) Cost-share funds are authorized on moist soil units (shallow water areas) for periodic disking or mowing to removed undesirable plant species and in conjunction with water management to encourage beneficial herbaceous species.
 - 4) Cost-share funds are authorized on utility right-of-ways throughout forested for disking to set back plant succession where a needs determination concludes erosion is not likely. Planting native forbs such as partridge pea are also eligible for cost share assistance where site conditions permit.
 - 5) Cost-share funds are authorized on Native grass plantings during the establishment year only. Mowing and/or chemical treatments are authorized to release native stands from weed competition. In subsequent years, strip disking and/or chemical treatments area allowed a one-time treatment enhance the quality of the stand for nesting birds. Strip disking is prohibited from March 1 to June 1.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice shall be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 15 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications**
- 1) This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the FOTG: Early Secessional Habitat Management (647).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share:**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to facilitate the application of conservation practices that treat the soil, water, air, plant, animal, and human resource concerns.
- B. **Apply** this practice to eligible land to protect treated critical areas from trampling and grazing by livestock; restrict access to priority habitat restoration areas, and to restrict access to applicable facilities (i.e. ponds and shallow water areas).
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized only for the purpose is for use exclusion, critical area treatment, or applicable facility protection.
 - 2) Exclusion fences may be eligible, as determined by the NRCS designated conservationist, if:
 - The fence is an integral part of a conservation system, such as a planned grazing system that facilitates improved management of grazing land, or protects certain areas from livestock when it is necessary for proper use of the area,
 - The area adjacent to the boundary fence is vital to the success of the conservation management system,
 - The primary purpose is not to separate ownership or exclude livestock from transportation networks, residential, commercial or industrial areas.
 - 3) Cost-sharing will ***not*** be approved for the replacement or repair of existing fencing.
 - 4) Cost-share rates are based on fence designs that will meet the minimum requirements listed in the 382 Fence standards and specifications in Section IV of the NRCS FOTG.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained for 20 years or until the purpose of the fence has been met under critical area treatment. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice will be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications; 382, Fence; Section IV of the NRCS FOTG.
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share:**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to control erosion, protect edges of field, and provide wildlife food and cover.
- B. **Apply** this practice to establish perennial introduced or native herbaceous vegetative cover on crop field edges, or permanent native herbaceous vegetative cover on hay field edges, especially edges adjacent to water bodies.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) **Crop field edges** - Cost-share is authorized for the establishment of permanent introduced or native herbaceous vegetative cover. Cropland for this purpose is defined as land cropped at least one of the previous five years to an annually planted or sugar cane crop (not ryegrass or other annuals planted for grazing purposes). Idle cropland for this purpose is defined as land that has had some management activity (i.e. mowing, disking, burning, etc) within the past five years.
 - 2) **Hay field edges** - Cost-share is **only** authorized for the establishment of permanent “native” herbaceous vegetative cover. Hayland for this purpose is defined as land being utilized on an annual basis to produce livestock forage that is mechanically harvested, without grazing of domestic livestock.
 - 3) Cost-share is authorized for fertilizer, lime, seedbed preparation, eligible seed, and planting.
 - a. **“Introduced” species - Fertilizer and Lime:** Cost-share may be authorized for a quantity of nutrients (N, P, K) and/or Lime, within the minimum and maximum application recommended by a current soil test (taken within the past 3 years) for the targeted species and treatment. **The soil test results must be provided to NRCS in order for the application to be considered eligible and prior to ranking the application.** Cost share quantity will **not exceed 100 lbs of N / acre, or 2 tons Lime / acre.** Liming materials should be applied and worked into the soil well in advance or at the time of seeding.
 - b. **“Native” species - Fertilizer:** Cost-share may be authorized, when needed, for a quantity of nutrients (Phosphorous (P) and Potassium (K)) within the minimum and maximum application range established by the district conservationist in accordance with the NRCS FOTG and in consultation with the NRCS state agronomist. A soil test is **not** required. For “native” grass, forb, and legume plantings, Nitrogen (N) is not recommended and will not be planned. Nitrogen and Lime application is **not** authorized for cost-share and will not be required. Maximum Phosphorous and Potassium application for “native” plantings will not exceed (P) 60 lbs/acre and (K) 60 lbs/acre.
 - c. **Eligible Seed:** Cost-share is on a Pure Live Seed (PLS) basis. Seed and Rate must meet specifications as listed in Practice (386) Field Border, Standards and Specifications of the FOTG. Inoculation of legume seed is required. Contact state office technical staff (Plant Material Specialist or Wildlife Biologist) for recommended inoculates of native species.
 - 4) Cost-share is authorized for Pre-Plant Herbicide Treatment **only** when needed and **only** for establishing “native” herbaceous vegetation. (*Pre-Plant Herbicide Treatment is allowed as a “burn down” for establishing introduced species through No-Till, in lieu of seedbed preparation. However, the cost of this treatment is covered in the seedbed preparation portion of the establishment average cost, and therefore is **NOT** allowed as additional cost-share.*) Level of treatment will be based on the following category descriptions.

Chemicals used in performing this practice must be federally, state and locally registered and must be applied in accordance with authorized registered uses, label directions, and other federal and state requirements and policies.

- a. “Light Weed Competition” is defined as: 1) “annual” grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush - stocking less than 100 stems per acre and height less than 12 inches; OR, a combination of both 1) and 2).
 - b. “Medium Weed Competition” is defined as having at least one of the following: 1) “perennial” grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush – stocking 100 to 300 stems per acre or height 12 to 24 inches.
- 5) Cost-sharing is authorized for Pumping Plant (533), Pipeline (516), and Watering Facility (614), **only** when the Field Border is providing wildlife habitat adjacent to an existing water body in a pasture area and there is a need to establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from the water body. Cost-share for this livestock watering system is authorized at the minimum level needed to divert the watering point outside of the established wildlife area.
- a. “Nose Pumps”, pipeline, and trough: only when placed a minimum of 300 linear feet away from headquarters, barns, etc.: or
 - b. Portable “Solar Pumps” (minimum size pump required), with solar power energy source when needed, pipeline, and trough: only when placed a minimum of 300 linear feet away from headquarters, barns, etc.
- 6) Cost-sharing is authorized for Fence (382) only when needed for livestock exclusion.
- 7) Cost-sharing is **not authorized** for:
- a. Clearing of rocks or other obstructions from the area to be seeded
 - b. Fencing
 - c. Converting land that is considered “wetlands” (i.e. crawfish ponds that are not annually tilled) under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
 - d. Converting land from a stand of manageable or partially manageable timber or pulpwood or has had a stand of manageable or partially manageable timber or pulpwood **after December 23, 1985** to a grass or legume cover. A "manageable stand" is defined as a stand of trees that has adequate stocking for management, good health, vigorous growth, and has not reached its optimum value.
- 8) Consideration should be given to the needs of wildlife when determinations as to seed varieties and other practice specifications are made.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 10 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications**: This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Field Border (386); and if needed, Pumping Plant (533); Pipeline (516); Watering Facility (614); and Fence (382)
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**:
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to control prescribed burns when establishing or managing a stand of trees for regeneration while considering environmental needs.
- B. **Apply** this practice to cropland, pasture or forest ground suitable for regeneration or management of a stand of trees for multipurpose forestry and wildlife benefits.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) A forest management plan is required in all cases to be eligible for cost-share funds.
 - 2) Cost-share funds are authorized for disking/plowing (double disked or heavy equipment) of fire breaks.
 - 3) This practice will be used for all WHIP contacts requiring prescribed burning.
- D. **Lifespan** - The practice shall be maintained for the length of the WHIP contract following installation and establishment. Cost-share funds must be refunded if the practice is destroyed during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Fire Break (394).
- E. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

FILTER STRIP 393

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to remove sediment and other pollutants from runoff or waste water and improve water quality.
- B. **Apply** this practice on eligible lands where there is a need to filter sediments and point source pollutants from runoff and protect the environment and critical habitat.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-share is authorized **only** for the establishment of perennial “native” herbaceous vegetative cover.
 - 2) Cost-share is authorized for shaping, seedbed preparation, planting, seeds, fertilizer and lime.
 - a. **“Native” species - Fertilizer:** Cost-share may be authorized, when needed, for a quantity of nutrients (Phosphorous (P) and Potassium (K)) within the minimum and maximum application range established by the district conservationist in accordance with the NRCS FOTG and in consultation with the NRCS state agronomist. A soil test is **not** required. For “native” grass, forb, and legume plantings, Nitrogen (N) is not recommended and will not be planned. Nitrogen and Lime application is **not** authorized for cost-share and will not be required. Maximum Phosphorous and Potassium application for “native” plantings will not exceed (P) 60 lbs/acre and (K) 60 lbs/acre.
 - b. **Eligible Seed:** Cost-share is on a Pure Live Seed (PLS) basis. Seed and Rate must meet specifications as listed in Practice (393) Filter Strip, Standards and Specifications of the FOTG. Inoculation of legume seed is recommended. Contact state office technical staff (Plant Material Specialist or Wildlife Biologist) for recommended inoculates of native species.
 - 3) Cost-share is authorized for Pre-Plant Herbicide Treatment **only** when needed and **only** for establishing “native” herbaceous vegetation. Level of treatment will be based on the following category descriptions. Chemicals used in performing this practice must be federally, state and locally registered and must be applied in accordance with authorized registered uses, label directions, and other federal and state requirements and policies.
 - a. **“Light Weed Competition”** is defined as: 1) “annual” grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush - stocking less than 100 stems per acre and height less than 12 inches; OR, a combination of both 1) and 2).
 - b. **“Medium Weed Competition”** is defined as having at least one of the following: 1) “perennial” grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush – stocking 100 to 300 stems per acre or height 12 to 24 inches.
 - 4) Cost-sharing is **not authorized** for:
 - a. Clearing of rocks or other obstructions from the area to be seeded
 - b. Fencing
 - c. Converting land that is considered “wetlands” (i.e. crawfish ponds that are not annually tilled) under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
 - d. Converting land from a stand of manageable or partially manageable timber or pulpwood or has had a stand of manageable or partially manageable timber or pulpwood **after December 23, 1985** to a grass or legume cover. A “manageable stand” is defined as a stand of trees that has adequate stocking for management, good health, vigorous growth, and has not reached its optimum value.

- 5) Consideration should be given to the needs of wildlife when determinations as to seed varieties and other practice specifications are made.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 10 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications** - This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Filter Strip (393).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to establish a stand of trees for regeneration while considering environmental needs.
- B. **Apply** this practice for multipurpose forestry benefits to areas meeting Tree and Shrub Establishment (612) WHIP criteria.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) A forest management plan approved by NRCS and to be implemented by the participant is required in all cases to be eligible for cost-share funds. Cost-share is limited to site preparation required for the establishment of trees for the production of forest products where the potential productivity of the site meets or exceeds established minimum standards. Payment for this practice will be withheld until tree/shrub establishment is completed for the entire field.
 - 2) Cost-share funds are authorized for:
 - a. **Natural regeneration**
 1. Reducing or eliminating competing vegetation, including unmerchantable or undesirable trees and brush.
 2. Creating soil conditions suitable for the natural establishment of seedlings representing the desired tree species. Seed sources must be adequate before site preparation is performed. Seed trees will be left until the area is regenerated.
 3. Cost-share is authorized for one additional treatment on the area originally site prepared, if uncontrollable circumstances occur, such as a poor seed crop, and natural regeneration fails to become established to the required stocking level.
 - b. **Artificial regeneration**
 1. Technical assistance must be used to determine the suitability of the land for site preparation and the measures necessary to prevent the degradation of the site by soil erosion. Note: Deep tillage with berm is not authorized for cost share.
 2. **Chemical Application for Site Preparation:** Herbicides used in this practice must be labeled for forestry use and rates per acre must be approved by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry before application. Minimal acceptable rates per acre to various herbicides will be on file at the local LDAF office. Level of treatment will be based on the following category descriptions.
 - i. **“Light Weed Competition”** is defined as: 1) **“annual”** grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush - stocking less than 100 stems per acre and height less than 12 inches; OR, a combination of both 1) and 2).
 - ii. **“Medium Weed Competition”** is defined as having at least one of the following: 1) **“perennial”** grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush – stocking 100 to 300 stems per acre or height 12 to 24 inches.
 - iii. **“Heavy Weed Competition”** is defined as woody brush – stocking greater than 300 stems per acre or height greater than 24 inches.
 3. Sub-soiling is authorized as a component to silvicultural treatment **only** when determined **needed** in accordance with the NRCS FOTG, Section IV, Standards and Specifications, and included in the forest management plan.

FOREST SITE PREPARATION (490)

- 3) Chemicals used in performing this practice must be federally, state and locally registered and must be applied in accordance with authorized registered uses, label directions, and other federal and state requirements and policies.
- 4) Consideration must be given to protecting the resource base and the environment.
- 5) Cost-share funds are **not authorized** for:
 - a. Site preparation for ornamental Christmas trees or orchard trees.
 - b. Fencing
 - c. Measures to protect seedlings from wildlife destruction.
 - d. Deep Tillage with berm

D. **Lifespan** – This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 1 year following installation and establishment. Cost-share funds must be refunded if the practice is destroyed during its lifespan.

E. **Specifications** – This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Forest Site Preparation (490).

F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**

- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to release seedlings from competing vegetation, improve understory forage production aesthetics, wildlife habitat, recreation and improve water quality.
- B. **Apply** this practice if needed to release seedlings from competing vegetation on areas meeting Tree and Shrub Establishment (612) WHIP criteria, OR, to create woodland openings and habitat diversification.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) A forest management plan approved by NRCS and to be implemented by the participant is required to be eligible for cost-share funds. Cost-share funds are limited to the release of seedlings for the primary purpose of eliminating competing vegetation where the site meets or exceeds the established minimum standards, on all land to trees.
 - 2) Cost-share funds are authorized for:
 - a. Releasing desirable seedlings from competing vegetation.
 1. **Release**: Broadcast by ground or aerial methods for the purpose of releasing planted seedling from over-topping competition, or to establish a stand of trees through natural regeneration while considering environmental needs.
 2. Trees can be planted followed by an approved herbicide application considered safe for the release of newly planted seedlings. Herbicide recommendations are to be made by a person knowledgeable in forest herbicide use and all labels must be followed. This “release” herbicide treatment must be completed during the active growing season of the targeted species, as specified in the NRCS FOTG, Section IV.
 3. Herbicides used in this practice must be labeled for forestry use and rates per acre must be approved by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry before application. Minimal acceptable rates per acre to various herbicides will be on file at the local LDAF office. Level of treatment will be based on the following category descriptions.
 - i. **“Light Weed Competition”** is defined as: 1) “**annual**” grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush - stocking less than 100 stems per acre and height less than 12 inches; OR, a combination of both 1) and 2).
 - ii. **“Medium Weed Competition”** is defined as having at least one of the following: 1) “**perennial**” grass and/or broadleaf weeds; OR, 2) woody brush – stocking 100 to 300 stems per acre or height 12 to 24 inches.
 - iii. **“Heavy Weed Competition”** is defined as woody brush – stocking greater than 300 stems per acre or height greater than 24 inches.
 4. Improvements should be done in a way that preserves or improves the environment, maintains or enhances wildlife habitat and aesthetics.

FOREST STAND IMPROVEMENT (666)

- b. Creating woodland openings for habitat diversification.
 - 1. Eligible in areas where there is little understory cover or existing snags.
 - 2. Openings are limited to a minimum of ½ acre and a maximum of 2 acres in size.
 - 3. Maximum of 1 opening per forty acres of dominate tree species.
 - 4. Maximum of 10 openings per contract
 - 5. The majority of the subdominant trees within the proposed opening will be chemically deadened to achieve the opening.
 - 6. Herbicides used in this practice must be labeled for forestry use and rates per acre must be approved by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry before application. Minimal acceptable rates per acre to various herbicides will be on file at the local LDAF office. Level of treatment will be based on the following category description.
 - i. “Heavy Weed Competition” is defined as woody brush – stocking greater than 300 stems per acre or height greater than 24 inches.

D. Lifespan: This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 10 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-share funds must be refunded if practice is destroyed during its lifespan.

E. Specifications – This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Forest Stand Improvement (666).

F. Maximum Federal Cost-Share:

- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to allow for the removal of forest products while minimizing on-site and off-site damage to the resources, such as controlling runoff to prevent erosion and maintain or improve water quality.
- B. **Apply** this practice to forestland when needed to maintain site productivity, control sheet, rill, and gully erosion, and enhance water quality and wildlife habitat.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized only for the installation of:
 - a) Waterbars
 - b) Broad-based dips
 - c) Rolling dips
 - d) Wing ditches
 - e) Structure for Water Control (587) when needed to facilitate water flow through any of the above.
 - f) Critical Area Planting (342) when needed to establish vegetative cover on the above constructed areas.
 - g) Mulching (484) when needed to protect the above disturbed areas from erosion.
 - 2) Cost-sharing is **NOT** authorized for the construction or maintenance of skid trails, landings, or roads.
- D. **Lifespan** – This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 5 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications** – These measures must be constructed to meet the requirements of the applicable standards and specifications in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Section IV: Forest Trails and Landing (655); and if applicable, Structure for Water Control (587); Critical Area Planting (342); Mulching (484).
- 1) Place waterbars, broad-based dips, rolling dips, and/or wing ditches on roads, skid trails, firebreaks, and other applicable forestland areas where surface water runoff may be concentrated and cause soil erosion.
 - 2) Trees, stumps, brush, roots, weeds, and other objectionable material shall be removed from the work area.
 - 3) Disturbed area will be protected and/or revegetated according to Mulching (484) and/or Critical Area Planting (342) specifications.
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

HEAVY USE AREA PROTECTION 561

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is stabilize frequently and intensively used areas to improve water quality and/or prevent erosion.
- B. **Apply** this practice where needed establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for foundations (pads) in conjunction with Watering Facility (614) **only** where there is a need to establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body.
 - 2) Cost-share for this livestock watering system is authorized at the minimum level needed to divert the watering point outside of the established wildlife area.
 - 3) Cost-share is **NOT** authorized in conjunction with newly constructed Ponds or Shallow Water Areas.
- D. **Lifespan:** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 10 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Heavy Use Area Protection (561).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

MULCHING 484

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to conserve moisture; prevent surface compaction or crusting; reduce runoff and erosion; control weeds; and establish plant cover.
- B. **Apply** this practice on soils subject to erosion that have been disturbed during installation of other WHIP practices.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
 - 1) **Cost-sharing** - is authorized for labor and materials as specified in NRCS practice 484.
- D. **Lifespan** - The practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 1 year or until permanent vegetation is established. Cost-shares must be refunded if the practice is destroyed during the lifespan.
- E. **Specifications**
 - 1) This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Mulching (484).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
 - 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice through WHIP is to develop a pest management program that is environmentally acceptable to control and manage the expansion of noxious weeds (i.e., cogongrass) that directly threaten native endemic priority habitat areas throughout Louisiana.
- B. **Apply** this practice to all land uses where the suppression of Congrongrass is needed.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost sharing is authorized **ONLY** for the suppression of Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrical*) through chemical application.
 - a. Cost sharing for bush hogging / mowing **before and in conjunction with chemical application** may be authorized on a site specific basis.
 - b. Cost sharing is authorized for three (3) years of treatment. The first year treatment will consist of a chemical application to the entire infested area. The second and third year treatments will consist of “spot” chemical application to all re-emergent Cogongrass within the first year treatment area.
 - c. Cost sharing is authorized for “Initial Treatment – Commercial Pesticide Application” **only** when the herbicide is applied by a State Licensed Commercial Pesticide Applicator.
 - d. Cost sharing is authorized **only** when infestation of Cogongrass has been confirmed by the District Conservationist. Photographs of the infestation will be maintained in the case file. District Conservationist are to obtain recommended treatment methods and chemical application rates from Area or State Specialist during plan development and prior to contract obligation.
 - 2) Cost sharing is **NOT** authorized for the mechanical control of Cogongrass.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-share for one year following the calendar year of the last (third) treatment.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice will be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications; 595, Pest Management; Section IV of the NRCS FOTG.
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

PIPELINE 516

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to convey water for livestock.
- B. **Apply** this practice where needed establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for pipe and appurtenances, trenching, and back-filling **only** where there is a need to establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body.
 - 2) Cost-share for this livestock watering system is authorized at the minimum level needed to divert the watering point outside of the established wildlife area.
 - 3) Cost-sharing is authorized for pipe diameters of 2" or less.
 - 4) Cost-share is **NOT** authorized in conjunction with newly constructed Ponds or Shallow Water Areas.
 - 5) Cost-sharing is authorized for pipelines that are used exclusively for conveying water to livestock watering facilities. T's, Y's, off-sets, etc., that divert water from the EQIP pipeline to provide water for any purpose other than livestock watering facilities are **Prohibited**.
- D. **Lifespan:** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 20 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Pipeline (516).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

POND 378

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to provide water for wildlife and to maintain or improve water quality.
- B. **Apply** this practice to areas that will provide water and an aquatic environment for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, and other environmental purposes.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for:
 - a. Construction of ponds, including all needed earthwork and structures.
 - b. Fencing, if needed to protect the pond from pollution by livestock. **Ponds will not be used for watering livestock.**
 - c. Mulching and/or Critical Area Planting, as needed. Dams and earth spillways must be seeded or sodded with perennial vegetation, whether or not cost-share is provided.
 - 2) Ponds that are located on cropland, pastureland, or hayland, must have a buffer of at least one chain in width from the waterline established and maintained to wildlife beneficial trees/shubs and/or perennial native herbaceous vegetation. The buffer area and the pond must be fenced to exclude livestock when located on a grazing land unit.
- D. **Lifespan** - The system shall be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 20 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:**
- 1) **Ponds** - This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Pond (378); and if applicable, Fence (382); Structure for Water Control (587); Critical Area Planting (342), and Mulching (484).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share** -
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List
 - No more that \$3000.00 will be allowed per pond per contract

PRESCRIBED BURNING 338

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to control undesirable vegetation, prepare sites for planting or seeding; control plant disease; reduce fire hazards; and improve wildlife habitat.
- B. **Apply** this practice to eligible lands where needed to facilitate the management of plants and animals for environmental purposes.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for:
 - a. site preparation for tree planting - refer to Practice 490, Forest Site Preparation.
 - b. site preparation for seeding where cultivation is not required.
 - c. controlling plant competition, undesirable vegetation, and excess accumulation of fuel.
 - a. promote the growth of desirable forage for wildlife.
 - 2) **To be eligible for payment:** Participant must provide NRCS with a copy of the “burn plan” in accordance with state and local laws and with the signature of the State Certified Burner.
 - 3) Longleaf pine stands are eligible for cost-share assistance for prescribed burning when:
 - a. The majority of the stand has reached root collar diameter of 1/2 inch, but not when more than 15% of the stand has initiated height growth, and
 - b. The stand is either less than 16 inches or more than 20 inches tall.

NOTE: Burning during the early growing season is preferred to stimulate height growth and reduce hardwood competition in long leaf pine forests.
 - 4) “Brackish” Marsh is eligible for vegetation succession manipulation by the use of Prescribed burning for the purpose of habitat and food source enhancement and is limited to the following conditions:
 - a. One burn every three years and no more than 4 burns in a 10 year span.
 - b. A maximum of 500 acres per application / contract.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice has a 5 year lifespan and is limited to not more than three burns in 5 years. Marsh burning is limited to one burn every three years no than 4 burns in 10 years.
- E. **Specifications** - This practice will be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS FOTG, Practice 338, Prescribed Burning.
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share:**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

PUMPING PLANT 533

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to provide a dependable water supply for livestock.
- B. **Apply** this practice where needed establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for pumping plant **only** where there is a need to establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body.
 - a. “Nose Pumps”: only when placed a minimum of 300 linear feet away from headquarters, barns, etc.: or
 - b. Portable “Solar Pumps” (minimum size pump required), with solar power energy source: only when placed a minimum of 300 linear feet away from headquarters, barns, etc.
 - 2) Cost-share for this livestock watering system is authorized at the minimum level needed to divert the watering point outside of the established wildlife area.
 - 3) Cost-share is **NOT** authorized in conjunction with newly constructed Ponds or Shallow Water Areas.
- D. **Lifespan:** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 15 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Pumping Plant (533).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFER 391

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to remove, reduce, or buffer the effects of nutrients, sediment, organic matter, and other pollutants prior to entry into surface water and ground water recharge systems; To create shade to lower water temperatures which will improve habitat for aquatic organisms; and To provide a source of detritus and woody debris for aquatic organisms and wildlife habitat.
- B. **Apply** this practice to eligible land adjacent to permanent or intermittent streams, lakes, rivers, ponds, wetlands, and areas with groundwater recharge.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized within minimum and maximum buffer widths and zones.
 - 2) Cost-sharing is authorized for the establishment of the Riparian Forest Buffer through: Forest Site Preparation (490); Tree/Shrub Establishment (612); Conservation Cover (327); and Forest Stand Improvement (666).
 - 2) Cost-sharing is authorized for Pumping Plant (533), Pipeline (516), and Watering Facility (614), as needed, when the Riparian Forest Buffer is in a pasture area and there is a need to establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from the water body. Cost-share for this livestock watering system is authorized at the minimum level needed to divert the watering point outside of the established wildlife area.
 - c. “Nose Pumps”, pipeline, and trough: only when placed a minimum of 300 linear feet away from headquarters, barns, etc.: or
 - d. Portable “Solar Pumps” (minimum size pump required), with solar power energy source when needed, pipeline, and trough: only when placed a minimum of 300 linear feet away from headquarters, barns, etc.
 - 3) Cost-sharing is authorized for Fence (382) only when needed for livestock exclusion.
- D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 15 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications**
- 1) This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Riparian Forest Buffer (391); Forest Site Preparation (490); Tree/Shrub Establishment (612); Conservation Cover (327); Forest Stand Improvement (666)
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to keep, make, or improve habitat for waterfowl, fur bearers, and other wildlife.
- B. **Apply** this practice to agricultural lands and moist soil areas where water can be impounded or regulated by diking, ditching, or flooding. Water control structures must be closed from October 15 through March 15 annually.
- C. **Policies:**
1. Cost-share funds are authorized for the construction of Shallow Water Areas through Dike (356) and Structure for Water Control (587).
 2. Cost-share funds are **NOT** authorized for construction of Dikes or the installation of Water Control Structures in fields that are used for the commercial production of rice.
 3. Pumping will be cost-shared when shallow water areas are flooded for early seasonal water. Pumping must begin by August 1 and be completed no later than September 15. **Maximum of 1 acre foot (12 inches) per year.**
 4. Rice fields will be eligible for “early seasonal” flooding assistance when these fields are rolled, water buffaloes, or lightly disked prior to flooding, and the water is held until January 15 annually.
 5. Cost-share funds for vegetative manipulation is authorized through Early Seccessional Habitat Management (647).
- D. **Lifespan** – Cost-share for construction of shallow water area - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 10 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-share for “early seasonal” flooding – This practice must be maintained through the specified flooding season. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice will be carried out in accordance with NRCS FOTG, Section IV; 646, Shallow Water Management for Wildlife; Dike (356); Water Control Structure (587)
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

STREAMBANK & SHORELINE PROTECTION 580

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to stabilize or protect banks of streams, lakes, estuaries or excavated channels.
- B. **Apply** this practice to natural or excavated channels where the streambanks are susceptible to erosion and to shorelines where the problem can be solved with relatively simple structures or vegetation.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for:
 - a. removal of fallen trees, stumps, and debris
 - b. removal of trees and brush that adversely affect the growth of desirable bank vegetation
 - c. reduction of the slope of streambanks to provide a suitable condition for vegetative protection or the installation of structural measures.
 - d. placement of rock with filter blanket
 - e. deflectors constructed of posts, piling, fencing, rock or other materials
 - f. fencing for protection from damage from livestock or vehicular traffic
 - g. vegetation for erosion control
 - h. revetments
 - j. groins
 - k. vegetation
- D. **Lifespan** - This system shall be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 20 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the farmer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice must be constructed to meet the requirements of the standards and specifications in the NRCS Technical guide, Section IV; 580, Streambank & Shoreline Protection.
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

STRUCTURE FOR WATER CONTROL 587

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to control the stage, discharge, distribution or delivery of water in open channels or water use area.
- B. **Apply** this practice wherever a permanent structure is needed as an integral part of a pond, or shallow water management area for wildlife.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for applicable structures for systems identified in paragraph "B" above.
 - 2) Cost-sharing is **not** authorized for irrigation structures which are part of a distribution system.
 - 3) Cost-sharing is **not** authorized for culverts installed for the purpose of providing vehicle or equipment access.
 - 4) Cost-sharing is **not** authorized for interior structures for water management for rice or aquaculture production.
 - 5) Cost-sharing is **not** authorized for the installation of water control structures in fields that are used for the commercial production of rice.
- D. **Lifespan** - The structures shall be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 20 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** The practice must meet the requirements of the applicable standards and specifications in Section IV or the NRCS Technical Guide, Structure for Water Control 587, and Critical Area Planting, 342.
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to establish a stand of trees/shrubs in an area that will enhance environmental benefits and wildlife habitat.
- B. **Apply** this practice for: 1) The conversion of pastureland, hayland or cropland to trees; 2). Areas of reforestation when establishing Longleaf Pine stands on historical longleaf pine areas; and/or, 3) areas of habitat diversity to improve environmental and wildlife benefits.
- C. **Policies** for this practice are as follows:
- 1) Longleaf Pine establishment:
 - a. A forest management plan approved by NRCS and to be implemented by the participant is required to be eligible for cost-share funds.
 - b. Cost-share funds are authorized for the conversion of **only** cropland, pastureland, or hayland that is suitable for the establishment of a stand of longleaf pine as described in Practice Code 612 – Tree and Shrub Establishment. These longleaf pine plantings may include hardwood plantings on “bottom” areas adjacent to permanent or intermittent streams or bodies of water. However, cost-share funds for these hardwood areas are **only** authorized for up to 10% of the longleaf pine acres.
 - c. Cost-share funds are authorized for reforestation of wooded/cutover areas **only** when establishing a stand of Longleaf Pine on areas where longleaf pine historically grew. These longleaf pine plantings may include hardwood plantings on “bottom” areas adjacent to permanent or intermittent streams or bodies of water. However, cost-share funds for these hardwood areas are **only** authorized for up to 10% of the longleaf pine acres.
 - d. Containerized longleaf pine seedlings will be planted on suitable sites on 10X10 spacing (i.e., 435 per acre).
 - e. Bare root longleaf seedlings can be substituted when containerized stock is not available. Bare rooted seedlings will be planted on suitable site on 8X8 spacing (i.e., 680 per acre).
 - f. Proper site preparation and periodic prescribed burns to reduce competition from woody vegetation and stimulate the growth of associated grasses will be necessary plan components in restoring a longleaf pine ecosystem. **Note: Participant must be made aware of their responsibility to provide NRCS with a copy of the “burn plan” in accordance with state and local laws and with the signature of the State Certified Burner.**
 - g. Prescribed burning, site preparation, and herbicide treatments are eligible for cost share assistance.

TREE/SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT (612)

2) Hardwood establishment:

- a. A forest management plan approved by NRCS and to be implemented by the participant is required to be eligible for cost-share funds.
- b. Cost-share funds are authorized **only** for the conversion of cropland, pastureland, or hayland that is suitable for the establishment of a stand of Upland or Bottomland Hardwoods as described in Practice Code 612 – Tree and Shrub Establishment. These hardwood plantings may include a mixture of pine plantings. The percent pine in the hardwood to pine ratio will not exceed that of historical natural conditions (i.e. 80% hardwoods – 20% loblolly pine). However, the hardwood/pine mixture is limited to a minimum of 70% hardwoods that is beneficial to wildlife and a maximum (**not-to-exceed**) 30% pine.
- c. Bare root seedlings will be planted on a 12X12 spacing (302 per acre) following necessary site preparation, and
- d. A minimum of three tree hardwood species suitable to the site will be used.

3) Habitat Diversity:

- a. Tree and Shrub Establishment on Woodland openings (i.e., logging decks, logging roads, etc.)
 - b. Tree and Shrub Establishment on damaged woodlands (i.e., small areas damaged by pine beetles, fire, or ice. etc.)
 - c. Establishing food producing trees and shrubs (i.e. persimmon, mayhaw, etc.) on small area of woodland cutovers where planting food producing trees and shrubs are practical and beneficial.
- 4) Cost-share funds are authorized for seedlings, planting, and site preparation only where it is essential to permit planting desirable tree species. Technical assistance must be used to determine the suitability of the land for site preparation and the measures necessary to prevent the degradation of the site by soil erosion.
- 5) Cost-share funds are authorized for chemical release only when needed to release the planted stock from severe competition of weeds or brush
- 6) Plantings must be protected from destructive fire and destructive grazing. Grazing is permitted if recommended by a NRCS approved grazing plan which is incorporated in the forest management plan.
- 7) Cost-share funds are **not** authorized for:
- a. Requests for planting trees on more than 1,000 acres without a waiver from the state conservationist;
 - b. Planting orchard or ornamental trees;
 - c. Planting for Christmas tree production;
 - d. Site preparation utilizing deep tillage with a berm
 - e. Fencing; or
 - f. Measures to protect seedlings from wildlife destruction

TREE/SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT (612)

- D. **Lifespan** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 15 years following the calendar year of establishment. Cost-share funds must be refunded if the practice is destroyed during this lifespan.
- E. **Specifications**: This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Tree and Shrub Establishment (612); and as needed, Forest Site Preparation (490); and Forest Stand Improvement (666).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

USE EXCLUSION 472

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to protect, maintain or improve the quantity and quality of plant and animal resources and maintain cover to protect the soil resource.
- B. **Apply** this practice to eligible land where forest reproduction, soil hydrologic values, stream water quality, existing or planted vegetation can be damaged by livestock.
- C. **Policies:**
- 1) Cost-sharing is authorized for construction of fencing where livestock are present and have the potential to damage plant or water resources. Use Exclusion is established through Fence (382).
 - 2) Cost-sharing is *not* authorized for replacing or repairing existing fences.
- D. **Lifespan** – The practice must be maintained for the life of the contract.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice will be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications; 472, Use Exclusion; 472 & 382, Fence; Section IV of the NRCS FOTG.
- E. **Maximum Federal Cost-Sharing**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

WATERING FACILITY 614

- A. **The purpose** of this practice is to provide watering facilities for livestock at selected locations.
- B. **Apply** this practice where needed establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body.
- C. **Policies:**
- 4) Cost-sharing is authorized for trough, tanks, foundations, and appurtenances **only** where there is a need to establish a new watering point due to livestock exclusion from an existing water body, and only when placed a minimum of 300 linear feet away from headquarters, barns, etc.
 - 5) Cost-share for this livestock watering system is authorized at the minimum level needed to divert the watering point outside of the established wildlife area. Authorized watering facilities may be designed to facilitate a three (3) day water supply.
 - 6) Cost-share is **NOT** authorized in conjunction with newly constructed Ponds or Shallow Water Areas.
- D. **Lifespan:** - This practice must be maintained without additional cost-sharing for a minimum of 10 years following the calendar year of installation. Cost-shares must be refunded if the producer destroys the practice during its lifespan.
- E. **Specifications:** This practice must be carried out in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications contained in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide: Watering Facility (614). If foundations (pads) are planned, reference NRCS standards and specifications; Heavy Use Area Protection (561).
- F. **Maximum Federal Cost-Share**
- 75 % of the Statewide Average Cost List

APPENDIX D

Preliminary Plan

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Preliminary Plan

FY 2006

Applicant's name: _____ Application #: _____

Address: _____ Telephone #: _____

Eligible? (circle) yes no

Parish: _____ Applicant's status: _____

Landowner? (circle) yes no Written proof of land control?(circle) yes no

Goal/Objectives/Target species: _____

T&E species bonus: _____

Scenic streams/ Impaired waterbody subsegments: _____

Compliments other programs? _____

Contract length requested: (circle) 5 6 7 8 9 10 Other _____

Habitat type: (circle) Upland Wetland Riparian Aquatic

Geographic location: (circle) 131 133A 133B 134 150A 151 152A 152B

Existing land use %: Agriculture___ Forest/cut___ ROW___ Prairie___ Marsh___

Moist soil___

WHIP Conservation Practices	Acres (extent)	Total Cost/Acre	Cost-share requested %

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the information above and the cost-share percentages reflect my contract offer.

Applicant: _____ Date: _____

NRCS representative: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E

T & E Maps

APPENDIX F
Louisiana
Common Resource Areas (CRA)